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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. MONGBE	(Benin)
later:	Mr. ARELLANO (Vice-Chairman)	(Mexico)
later:	Mr. MONGBE (Chairman)	(Benin)

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AGENDA ITEM 94: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/48/182, A/48/279, A/48/291-S/26242, A/48/321, A/48/338, A/48/353, A/48/359, A/48/445-S/26501, A/48/484-S/26552, A/48/485; A/C.2/48/4)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (E/1993/35)

(b) UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

(c) UNITED NATIONS TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

(d) UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME

AGENDA ITEM 154: UNITED NATIONS INTERIM OFFICES (continued) (A/48/146 and Add.1 and A/48/585)

Opening statements

1. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the United Nations had several advantages in the area of operational activities, two of which were considerable. The first was the intergovernmental policy-making process which guided operational activities in the Second and Third Committees and the subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council, as well as in major international conferences. Those bodies formed a complex structure in which agreements could be negotiated and experience exchanged, while the intergovernmental process steered development efforts in the necessary direction. The result was not an externally imposed arrangement but, on the contrary, a democratic and open process. The Organization's second advantage was its presence in the field, since the operational activities of the different agencies were coordinated on the spot by the resident coordinators.

2. The guidelines laid down by the General Assembly were implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and were subject to a triennial review carried out in conformity with all the provisions of resolution 47/199. The touchstone of coordination was the improved coherence which could be seen at the country level. While many other development organizations had only recently started decentralizing, the United Nations was already able to draw on an extensive system of country-level coordination; decentralization was facilitated in each country by the country strategy note drawn up by the Government; that note defined what the system could and could not do and reflected the priorities of the country concerned. The system was currently being set in place and enjoyed the broad support of the beneficiaries; it had been the subject of a review during a recent workshop held in Turin at the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The report of the workshop contained guidelines which could be useful to Governments. In the final analysis it was Governments, however, which would decide how United Nations cooperation should be implemented in the different countries. The country strategy note was therefore bearing fruit. The second element, related to the first, was the programme approach, which attempted to combine vertical and horizontal integration. The third was

national execution, which was an indispensable modality, since cooperation was specifically designed to strengthen national capacities.

3. Delegations could be assured that the United Nations development agencies paid serious heed to their insistence on the need for coordination and cost-effectiveness and that considerable progress had been made since the adoption of resolution 47/199. The function of coordination was in fact performed by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, which had no presence of its own in the field, where UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other programmes were active. Where the policy-making process was concerned, there were two essential elements: the current debate on restructuring, which would be the subject of a resolution, and the pledged contributions. Once it was adopted, the resolution should provide for any necessary changes in the course taken, find a better distribution of duties among the governing bodies and the executing agencies and make it easier to evaluate the activities carried out, thus leading to the creation of new machinery in 1994. Pledges, however, were declining, which gave cause for great concern since, at the same time, the demands made of the United Nations development agencies were constantly on the increase. Finally, he stressed the need to rationalize intergovernmental discussions on operational activities and called for increased contributions to those activities.

4. Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the world appeared to be producing crises with distressing regularity, such as famine, ethnic and other conflicts, refugee flows, extreme social disintegration, environmental disasters and even the collapse of States. The modern world was so interdependent that, if a crisis broke out in one area, all humankind was threatened.

5. In order to avert that danger, two initiatives were fundamental: implementing a new agenda for development and revitalizing international cooperation. The notion of sustainable human development was likely to give impetus to both undertakings. Further steps should be taken along the path opened up by the agreements reached by all Member States at a number of major world conferences. Declarations and plans alone were not sufficient for the implementation of that concept, which required both national will and international cooperation, concerted efforts and the mobilization of adequate resources. Pledged contributions still fell far short of needs. While expenditures on humanitarian assistance and refugees on the one hand, and on peace-keeping operations on the other, were constantly increasing, contributions to UNDP showed a decline. Yet those dangers could perhaps be avoided through preventive action, which would be more sensible than struggling to resolve crises once they had broken out.

6. In fact, extreme poverty, unprecedented inequalities, social disintegration, chronic environmental degradation and threats to human security already constituted a silent crisis, urgently necessitating sustainable human development. Such development not only stimulated economic growth, but it also distributed its benefits equitably, enabling people to achieve self-realization and to participate in the decisions affecting their lives and preserving the environment rather than destroying it. In that context, the empowerment of women was the key need and opportunity of the 1990s.

(Mr. Speth)

7. Development cooperation itself must change. The resources to combat the growing threat of global poverty must be found, as the risk of the cold war receded. The international community's support for development was under threat and risked becoming marginalized. A case in point was food security: given the likely population increase, world food production must at least triple over the next half century, requiring a considerable increase in output. The right to food must be recognized as a universal human right, both in theory and practice, for which the commitment of all parties concerned would be necessary, including Governments, the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD), scientists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and ordinary citizens. However, the consideration of aid should not be limited to questions of quantity, and further thought should also be given to the efficiency, quality and even the purpose of aid. The concept of aid should be taken a step further so as to forge North-South partnerships reflecting reciprocal responsibilities. To that end the international community must strengthen global institutions, seek additional resources and assign responsibilities, including those of the United Nations, in a rational and comprehensive way.

8. The growing imbalance between short-term emergency assistance and long-term development aid was a matter of grave concern. Each year, between 13 and 18 million people, mostly children, died of hunger, malnutrition and poverty; in 10 to 15 per cent of such cases hunger was caused by an emergency situation, while in 85 to 90 per cent it was the result of poverty. The United Nations could not acquiesce in the deafening silence surrounding the development crisis and the time had come for it to reclaim its original mandate in economic and social matters. The main principles of the United Nations - human rights, democracy, environmental protection and peace - could only be duly upheld in the context of true development. In other words, "An Agenda for Peace" required an "agenda for development". Sustainable human development was a prerequisite for lasting peace worldwide.

9. In view of the new scenario, the United Nations should strengthen its role in the development of nations. Its development system was composed of a uniquely rich group of organizations and programmes. That wealth should be turned to account and the mandates of the different organizations should be harmonized with a view to complementing the efforts of countries and the activities of international financial institutions and bilateral aid agencies.

10. The United Nations could not fight the battles of tomorrow with the weapons of yesterday. It must rise to the challenges of revitalization, renewal and reform which were indispensable. For 40 years the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had undertaken very demanding tasks, and its assets remained its long-term outlook, the emphasis it laid on national capacity-building, its relationship with Governments, United Nations organizations, NGOs and its multi- and intersectoral approach. Above all, it had a network of 131 field offices that provided a unique service to all the bodies carrying out United Nations operational activities. Since UNDP dispensed aid free of charge, it was not looking for quick returns and could concentrate on setting up systems and structures and processes which enabled development to advance with the broadest possible participation. UNDP embodied the principles of preventive development.

(Mr. Speth)

11. UNDP also required renewal. Following consultations with delegations, he would be submitting proposals to the UNDP Governing Council aimed at strengthening the capacity of UNDP to respond to the needs of countries and making the United Nations a unified, less fragmented and more efficient force for sustainable human development. In June the Governing Council had received a report on the active participation of UNDP in the follow-up to resolution 47/199. He had been requested by the Governing Council to work with the other United Nations organizations responsible for development; UNDP had actively cooperated with its partners in the Joint Consultative Group on Policy on various matters addressed by the resolution, and in particular the country strategy note, harmonization of programmes and cycles, common premises and the selection of resident coordinators. The Secretary-General had underlined the need to strengthen the role of the resident coordinator, who was at the centre of the activities of the system in each country. The network of country offices must be strengthened and modernized, above all through enhanced coordination at country level, since there were often complaints about the fragmentation of the United Nations system. UNDP would certainly not want the responsibility of running programmes for other organizations, but a body was needed which would play an integrating, consolidating and unifying role. In so doing it should make good use of the country notes and resort to other means too. UNDP must be more able to provide services to the bodies primarily responsible for emergency situations and refugees by acquiring in-depth expertise of the development problems which occurred in countries during the post-conflict period of transition, or in the introduction of market economies. He had already taken significant steps that would make for real change, on which he would report in due course. However, it was important to remember that the support provided to the operational activities in the field cost UNDP approximately $100 million per biennium and was thus a service which should not be taken for granted.

12. The greatest strength of the United Nations would never lie in its military authority, but rather in its moral authority, based on a real service provided to people so as to help them fulfil their aspirations for a better and dignified life. Such authority should not be challenged. However, the ability of the United Nations to remain a positive force working for sustainable human development was being undermined by a lack of resources and an increasing imbalance between the resources devoted to crises and those earmarked for real development, as well as the cost of the need for revitalization, renewal and reform. He expressed his gratitude to the Nordic countries for their long-standing political and financial support for the United Nations development activities. The countries had proposed an excellent package of reforms, which he fully endorsed. However, courage was needed to address five crying needs: a firm reassertion of the social, economic and environmental role of the United Nations in development cooperation, which complemented that of the international financial institutions and bilateral assistance agencies; the definition of an "agenda for development" as a complement to "An Agenda for Peace"; the consolidation of United Nations programmes for sustainable human development; the new arrangements required for financing economic and social programmes as well as enhanced coordination; an increase in the volume of development efforts made by the United Nations.

13. In conclusion, he called for a new and vigorous commitment to preventive and curative development, which was the only means of averting disaster.

14. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that, confronted with new problems which had arisen after the end of the cold war, the international community should act as one on several levels: to accelerate efforts so that the capacities which had arisen at the end of the cold war could bring forth solutions to new problems concerning durable development; to find new ways of reaching the countries which did not benefit directly from the post-cold war changes, i.e. mostly the poorest countries; to deal with the sudden onslaught of underlying problems that had festered for 45 years during the cold war, which had suddenly erupted and, as was the case with all problems relating to poverty and underdevelopment, needed to be addressed without delay. That was why a concerted and massive effort was essential and, in particular, a new approach on an international scale.

15. The United Nations system could and should play an essential role in the new context and establish for itself a new set of common strategies. The Second Committee had successfully been engaged over the years in achieving international consensus on a number of key issues concerning development. Experience had shown that a development strategy should fulfil several conditions in order to be effective: specific and achievable objectives that emerged from country-level experience needed to be set; specific objectives should be targeted which could be achieved in a specific time-frame and be monitored on a local, national and global basis; those targets must be supported by a programmatic strategy of implementation in which the agencies of the Organization had a particular, supportive role to play; highly capable international aid mechanisms had to be set up to benefit the different countries concerned; there must be specific mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the progress that had been made, for providing the necessary corrections.

16. That was well illustrated by experience acquired after the World Summit for Children, which was documented in the Secretary-General's report (A/48/321). The report provided information on successful action. On that day, nearly 150 heads of State or Government had signed the declaration of the Summit and more than 140 countries had prepared or were preparing national action programmes. Similarly, commitments made at the Summit had been reaffirmed in a large number of global and regional forums and had benefited from the full support of the system of the United Nations, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations. It was moreover extremely encouraging to note that those commitments had already been translated into concrete action by spectacular results: millions of children had been saved and an even larger number had been rescued from a life of misery. Much, however, still remained to be done. The Secretary-General's report on that respect recalled the Mid-Decade Goals which had been set: those targets were aimed at saving the lives of a further 2 million children per year and at achieving spectacular results with regard to health (elimination of poliomyelitis, neonatal tetanus etc.). Although those goals seemed ambitious, they were nevertheless attainable; the leaders of developing countries and developed countries had been committed to their achievements.

17. The Secretary-General's report by way of conclusion made clear that the World Summit for Social Development would be examining mid-decade achievements. That would provide the international community with the opportunity to redouble their efforts in order to reach those goals. He similarly believed that the

(Mr. Grant)

World Summit for Social Development would enable new mechanisms to be set up and new ambitious strategies to be launched.

18. Having reviewed resolution 47/199 he stressed that it provided Governments and the United Nations system with a new tool: the country strategy note. Many UNICEF representatives from all regions of the world had reported that new mechanisms had awakened the interest of Governments and that progress was already evident in that field.

19. As UNICEF was chairing the current year's Joint Consultative Group on Policies, it was particularly committed to the implementation of resolution 47/199. The Fund had already canvassed its offices in almost all developing countries and had taken measures to move offices to premises common to each of its governing bodies. Progress had also been made in many areas of strengthening the resident coordinator system. With the importance given to the team approach at the country level, he hoped that the General Assembly would help to keep the United Nations system moving down the path of resolution 47/199.

20. Mrs. CAPELING-ALAKIJA (Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women) said that UNIFEM was one of the rare organizations of the United Nations system which had a social movement as its base and owed its existence to the international women's movement. Its goal was therefore to defend the cause of women throughout the world. UNIFEM, in its capacity as a United Nations body, was in contact with Governments and also had close ties outside governmental spheres, particularly with the large number of women's organizations which had multiplied over the previous years. It was to those organizations that UNIFEM owed some duties. With the reluctance that such movements sometimes faced, UNIFEM understood that rhetoric was not enough and that it was necessary to provide real evidence to support its action.

21. In a modern world which had fallen prey to a multitude of crises calling for urgent assistance, it was often the case that those responsible for aid, having to attend to more urgent matters, considered that the problems facing women were of secondary importance. UNICEF responded to that by quoting specific facts: three quarters of the 900 million refugees in the world were women and the children in their care.

22. That was why UNIFEM had co-signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the High Commissioner for Refugees, whereby both organizations would cooperate more closely with a view to motivating the public vis-à-vis the situation facing women refugees. UNICEF, furthermore, worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to ensure that the needs of women were given full consideration in the activities of the programme.

23. UNIFEM actively participated in the preparation for the World Conference on Women, which was to be held in Beijing in 1995. Its wish was to see women's organizations and networks playing an active role in the mandate of the new institutions which would be set up in the wake of that Conference and of the World Summit for Social Development.

(Mrs. Capeling-Alakija)

24. To that effect, UNIFEM had launched programmes in the developing world to enable women to acquire management and negotiation skills which would allow them to participate at a decision-making level: in Africa, UNICEF had launched an innovative programme whereby young women would be sent to institutions in neighbouring countries to guide their activities; in Asia, it had launched a programme for instructing experienced training officers in negotiating skills, which they could in turn pass on to a large number of local women's organizations. In Latin America, UNIFEM worked together with Peruvian and Brazilian institutes under a management-training programme which took the specific role of women into account.

25. UNIFEM was also expanding its scope: in addition to the areas that traditionally concerned women, like agriculture and food security, it was moving into areas that had generally excluded women, such as international trade.

26. UNIFEM did not see its role as advancing "women's issues". Rather, it proceeded from the premise that women cut across all of today's most pressing challenges. UNIFEM knew that it would not solve them merely by including women in the process; but it was convinced that if women were excluded, it would have no hope of solving them.

27. UNIFEM had enjoyed generous support. She wanted to thank the leading donors, which had significantly increased their support in 1993. She was gratified by the steady support from developing countries, despite the prevailing economic crisis. She also paid tribute to the many women's organizations and non-governmental organizations which contributed their time and resources to the work of UNIFEM. Two new national committees had been set up, bringing the total number of UNIFEM national committees to 15. Its efforts to achieve the most effective management were paying off. Since 1988, donors had tripled their contributions to the Fund. As a result, it had been able to boost its programme delivery by over 200 per cent.

28. UNIFEM would continue its efforts not only to see that women had a place on the global agenda, but also to ensure that women had a voice in setting that agenda.

General debate

29. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said he understood that the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development represented the current position of the Secretary-General with regard to United Nations interim offices and that the Secretary-General would submit, in connection with the consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 by the Fifth Committee, the relevant proposals for financing.

30. Since the Secretary-General's proposals lacked clarity, the General Assembly needed to guide the work of the Secretariat. It should therefore, as a first step, reaffirm resolution 47/199, adopted by the Assembly at the conclusion of its triennial policy review of operational activities. That resolution, which allowed some room for manoeuvre, responded in detail, at both

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

programme and administrative levels, to the needs of all recipient countries, including those in which interim offices had been set up.

31. In that field, more than in any other, the Secretariat should not prepare innovative proposals but should give effect to the provisions adopted. There was no need to attribute to what had so far been called "interim offices" functions different from those defined for the other offices, since they were, quite simply, United Nations offices.

32. There was also little justification for giving the chiefs of those offices such resounding titles as "United Nations representative", which introduced an element of ambiguity and ran counter to resolution 47/199, in which the Assembly had emphasized that, in the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, the creation of an additional bureaucratic layer should be avoided. Paragraphs 38 to 40 of that resolution laid down the functions of the resident coordinators in a manner that was sufficiently broad to achieve efficiency and coordination. It was therefore essential at the current stage to put an end to political manoeuvres and to focus more on implementing those provisions.

33. Those same provisions were compatible with those that concerned humanitarian assistance and information, and General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 47/73 made it unnecessary and undesirable to take special measures with regard to countries where interim offices had been established. Moreover, political activities should pass through well-established channels, which were clearly distinct from procedures set up for operational activities, humanitarian assistance and information. In that area, too, new measures were unnecessary: the Assembly should reaffirm the validity of the decisions it had already taken. Consequently, it was those decisions which should inform the agreements that the Secretary-General might conclude with the Governments in question in respect of human rights, preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping activities. In that way, the political heritage comprising the diversity and compatibility of the mandates of the Organization would be safeguarded, for the benefit of all countries. The experience of recent years had shown that it was precisely at a time when the world was undergoing profound changes that there was a need to reaffirm the balance between the provisions designed to promote development and provide humanitarian assistance and those aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security.

34. In the light of the foregoing, the delegations of the Group of 77 and China would seek to promote the adoption of a resolution that reaffirmed the fundamental principles adopted by the Assembly in respect of operational activities and provided the basis on which the Fifth Committee should examine the means of financing the interim offices.

35. The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed their desire to cooperate with countries in which interim offices had been established and their determination to continue, with the other Members of the Organization, to provide the necessary guidelines for the work of the Secretariat.

36. Mr. URBAIN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that during the current session it would be necessary to take a decision on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors, which implied a new, more effective and in-depth approach with regard to the governing bodies of the various United Nations agencies and organizations. He welcomed the useful debate on that subject held in the context of the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council with the executive heads of the various organizations entrusted with operational activities, and expressed the view that informal meetings of that type should be organized periodically.

37. The problem that needed to be discussed was the follow-up given to General Assembly resolution 47/199, and the European Union remained concerned about its real implementation. It noted only meagre progress in strengthening the resident coordinator system, and hoped that future appointments would include more representatives of other United Nations funds and programmes. The European Union also considered that, in the light of the difficulty of defining the concept of evaluating the programme approach and national execution, the utmost efforts should be made to harmonize the system.

38. He considered that the country strategy note would be an essential tool enabling the United Nations system to respond effectively to the needs of the recipient countries.

39. The European Union considered it essential to implement resolution 47/199 in a satisfactory manner, given the importance of operational activities. Member States would have difficulty in justifying their contributions to the various funds and programmes if the system of evaluation and monitoring was not improved.

40. Resolution 47/199 of the General Assembly called for a change in the procedures for evaluating contributions and corresponding results. It appeared, however, that the United Nations system often measured the success of a programme simply in terms of the added activities. Yet United Nations programmes, like the assistance programmes of the European Union, must be judged seriously, in other words by the results obtained. The European Union was also concerned that not enough permanent staff were assigned to operational units, and it hoped that the issue would be considered as a matter of priority.

41. With regard to the integration of the Office for Project Services in the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the main question was to maintain the efficiency of that organ. It would seem that certain key questions - the rules concerning procurement of expertise and equipment or transfer of personnel of the said Department within the Office and the financing of the latter, for example - remained unresolved. It was clear that, given its vulnerability to market forces, the conditions of operation of the future office would have to be studied carefully. Accordingly, the European Union believed that serious consideration should be given to postponing the integration to January 1995.

42. Mr. FERNANDEZ DE COSSIO DOMINGUEZ (Cuba), referring to General Assembly resolution 47/199, recalled that it was the balanced product of difficult negotiations carried out in connection with the triennial policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system. The

(Mr. Fernandez de Cossio Dominquez, Cuba)

balance would be upset if any attempt was made to press for modification of a given point, or if any attempt was made to go back on the resident coordinator system.

43. His delegation had carefully studied the proposals of the Secretary-General concerning operational activities in seven Member countries of the Organization, and believed that it would be a mistake to deal with the United Nations presence in those countries in a discriminatory manner. The issue was being discussed again because a clear decision was needed on the establishment of new offices. In that connection, he recalled that the principle of universality was one of the fundamental principles of United Nations technical assistance. There was no question of changing that principle any more than there was any question of reopening discussions on the existing resident coordinator system.

44. Resolution 47/199 had recognized that the United Nations system had a role to play in assisting countries which were embarking upon far-reaching economic and social reforms. While calling for the adoption of an integrated, unified and beneficial approach, it had never recommended that the resident coordinator system should be modified. Quite the contrary, it had recalled General Assembly resolution 34/213 which stated expressly that the functions of the resident coordinator related exclusively to operational activities. Furthermore, it recalled resolution 46/182 which assigned to the resident coordinator tasks in respect of emergency humanitarian assistance.

45. The Secretary-General should take that as a starting-point when it came to implementing resolution 47/199 and establishing new offices.

46. Everyone acknowledged that efficiency and coordination must be improved. That was the spirit of resolution 47/199 and it was necessary to see that it was fully implemented.

47. The purpose of establishing a new type of representative of the Secretary-General was quite different. The United Nations representation in the field had already been clearly defined and delimited by Member States. Several delegations had already pointed out that introducing a political dimension into the matter would violate the principle of neutrality. Cuba fully supported that viewpoint.

48. Cuba agreed to the establishment of offices in all those countries which so requested, while respecting the principle of universality and non-discrimination, and it supported any effort aimed at enhancing the efficiency and improving coordination but it opposed any attempt to change the resident coordinator system as it had been clearly defined by the General Assembly.

49. Mr. Arellano (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

50. Mr. DEBADECHE (Algeria) reaffirmed the validity of the fundamental principles on which operational activities must be based as set forth in General Assembly resolution 47/199. The sole purpose of those activities should be to support United Nations structures in the field and to strengthen the activities

(Mr. Debadeche, Algeria)

and efforts of the developing countries in accordance with their priorities, specificities and national development strategies.

51. While the efforts made to revitalize operational activities, harmonize the programmes of various funds and agencies of the United Nations and strengthen the resident coordinator system were commendable, the steady decline in resources for financing those activities in recent years was a matter of concern. In 1993, contributions to UNDP had been 15 per cent lower than in 1992 and although official development assistance had increased in volume, in terms of percentage of GDP of the donor countries, it had declined. Operational activities were a special instrument for translating into action the mandates of the United Nations bodies responsible for economic and social development activities. In other words, the most critical role of the United Nations system was in the field.

52. Although no one questioned the need to revitalize United Nations activities in the economic and social sectors, it was none the less true that the various partners in development currently had different if not divergent interpretations of the intended purpose of that reform. For the developing countries the restructuring of the United Nations should enable the Organization to adapt to the new demands of development, particularly at a time when financing on favourable conditions was becoming ever rarer and when most of those countries had embarked on economic adjustment policies and institutional reforms. It was therefore essential to conclude the restructuring and revitalization process speedily. In order to gain credibility, United Nations action to promote development cooperation should be based on appropriate mechanisms that guaranteed resources for operational activities on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with needs. Such mechanisms should be set up without delay.

53. Mr. ISAKOV (Russian Federation) said that it was necessary to adopt an integrated approach to problems of international cooperation in order to promote development; accordingly, it was important to take into account economic, environmental, technological, demographic and other factors and to assert absolute priority for harmonious development of the human person.

54. Those objectives and principles should be integrated into United Nations operational activities and should guide them within the context of completely restructuring the social and economic sectors of the United Nations.

55. Although formulation of a new global concept for operational activities had not yet been completed, a high level of agreement had already been reached among the members of the international community regarding its principal parameters. It would be necessary to improve the level of the bodies governing funds and programmes, to strengthen inter-institutional coordination of resident coordinators' functions, to concentrate resources on specific priority projects and programmes and to establish closer ties with the Bretton Woods institutions. Harmonizing the programming cycles of the funding organizations, improving cooperation with non-governmental organizations and strengthening the presence of corresponding organizations at the local level constituted an important potential for increasing the efficiency of operational activities.

(Mr. Isakov, Russian Federation)

56. In that regard, the expansion of operational activities through new approaches aimed at improving their efficiency was accelerating. Judging from the work thus far accomplished, in particular by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, it was evident that implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 was under way, in particular regarding better coordination of external assistance, the increased responsibility of recipient countries regarding the utilization thereof and the introduction of the programme approach.

57. The activities undertaken by United Nations bodies in countries in transition were of particular interest to his delegation; they were of great assistance to the economic reform efforts. First and foremost, they provided assistance in the form of services of specialists and consultants to set up the institutional framework for a market economy, train management personnel and strengthen trade relations. Cooperation with United Nations funds and programmes in the specific areas of infancy and maternity, population and reducing the social costs of market reforms were also of particular interest to the Russian Federation; his delegation hoped that the United Nations would encourage the integration of his country in the world economy by helping it to become a full member of GATT.

58. On that subject, his delegation welcomed the decision adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at its fortieth session in resolution 1993/15 on technical cooperation in support of the transition to a market economy and democracy in countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. It was significant that UNDP had devised a strategy for providing assistance to economies in transition in that resolution. The planning and coordination of activities within the United Nations system should make it possible to improve their efficiency significantly while taking into account the extremely limited resources allocated to that group of countries.

59. It was encouraging to note that, in the countries in transition, UNDP had devoted particular attention to strengthening national capacities and to introducing management mechanisms, to privatization measures, to business management in market conditions and to developing human resources.

60. His delegation intended to ensure that ecology occupied an important place in the UNDP work programme in the Russian Federation and in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Resolution 1993/13 of the Governing Council of UNDP on regional cooperation for production of vulnerable ecosystems, including the Caspian Sea, had been conceived along those same lines. It was also to be hoped that UNDP would contribute, in one way or another, to resolving problems resulting from the Chernobyl disaster.

61. The Russian Federation was grateful to UNICEF for its tireless efforts to contribute to resolving the specific problems of the countries in transition relating to infancy and maternity, and to the other countries that had supported UNICEF activities, particularly in the Russian Federation, and appreciated the other agencies and programmes, including UNIDO, Habitat, the United Nations Volunteers programme and UNFPA which had also provided significant assistance. The Russian Federation was most anxious to cooperate on a practical level with UNFPA to improve the country's demographic situation.

62. Mr. SY (Observer for the Organization of African Unity) said that since the adoption by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU of the Declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world, OAU had defined three new priority areas of action. The first priority was the peaceful settlement of the multiple conflicts which hampered development activities, for which OAU had already devised a mechanism. The second priority was to promote the process of democratic transition and establish a stable environment which would free creative forces to foster development. The third priority was to accelerate the process of economic integration by gradually establishing an African Economic Community. The implementation of those priority activities required not only continued efforts on the part of the African countries but also the support of the international community and of the United Nations in particular.

63. That explained the importance that OAU accorded to operational activities for development and to the implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199. With regard to UNDP, the Council of Ministers of OAU welcomed the support which UNDP had provided to African countries and to their regional and subregional organizations. He had emphasized the importance of UNDP activities, in particular studies conducted on long-term national prospects and the implementation of the Initiative to strengthen capacities in Africa. He expressed concern, however, with the significant reduction of financial resources under the fifth programming cycle and the negative impact that that would have on Africa and, in particular, on the regional programme. Thus, the Council had appealed to all Member States to increase substantially their contributions to that organization that were destined for Africa and to add to the efforts of OAU member States.

64. Challenges at present were too important to allow institutions such as UNDP and UNICEF to want for resources. If the United Nations had set itself the priority task of preventing and settling conflicts, the multiplication of those conflicts proved that it was necessary to attack the grass-root causes of problems which were of an economic and social nature. In other words, the Agenda for Peace should not be an addition to the agenda for development but should rather depend on it. Only in that way would the enormous current resources invested in peace-keeping operations make it possible to attain the objectives of lasting peace and stability.

65. Mr. NAADJE (Ghana) said that the international community should intensify its efforts to improve the efficiency of operational activities within the United Nations system. The social and political consequences of economic stagnation were evident throughout the developing world, presenting new challenges for the United Nations, which, owing to its singular experience in the area of development, must play a central role.

66. General Assembly resolution 44/211, the principles of which define the question of operational activities, serves as a framework for the implementation of technical assistance to developing countries. It contains a set of general principles, guidelines and methods for coordinating and harmonizing projects financed by the United Nations development system. But not all those principles had led to practical strategies for aiding developing countries to strengthen national capacity for development.

(Mr. Naadje, Ghana)

67. The increasing interdependence of the various dimensions of development called for more coherent action on the part of the United Nations system. New approaches to the programming of operational activities must be adopted so as to provide the United Nations system with the necessary means to fulfil its tasks. General Assembly resolution 47/199 acknowledged the new dimensions of the development question by reaffirming the need to integrate and coordinate the programming procedures of the United Nations system.

68. With regard to technical cooperation, the situation had rapidly changed, deeply affecting developing countries. Programmes and projects could not be expected to fulfil their goals, since the resources available for those undertakings were dwindling. The concept of development itself had broadened; traditional indicators of economic growth had lost importance, and the basic needs of the human being had taken their place at the heart of the process. Resources to developing countries must be immediately increased so as to assist them in surmounting their difficulties. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of Developing Countries, adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session, called for the allocation of concessional resources to developing countries so as to enable them to cope with the challenges of the 1990s. The objective upon which developing countries had agreed, which was to earmark 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance and 0.15 per cent for assistance to the least developed countries, had not been met. The flow of resources allocated to operational development activities must therefore be considerably increased.

69. The affirmation of the importance of human development had altered operational activities of the United Nations system, and had laid new basis for an integrated approach to activities designed to support national policies.

70. The coordination of operational activities remained a troubling question. Coordination must be carried out in consultation with recipient countries, so as to maximize the efficiency and impact of the United Nations delivery system. It was crucial that operational activities should be systematically coordinated if programmes were to meet the goals and priorities of the developing countries.

71. It was more urgent than ever to rationalize the operational component of the United Nations system, so as to improve the efficiency of programmes and services. The Committee, for its part, should draft measures to ensure effective implementation of programmes, and to strengthen the coordination and harmonization of activities among all United Nations bodies concerned with national capacity-building.

72. Mr. KELLOWAY (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, observed that General Assembly resolution 47/199 contained many elements critical to the effective functioning of the United Nations development system. It was therefore unnecessary for the General Assembly to provide the Secretariat with new guidelines. It fell to the Secretariat, and in particular to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, to ensure that its provisions should be implemented in their entirety and that any measures taken should facilitate the fulfilment of its goals. In sum, progress had been made in some areas but not in others.

(Mr. Kelloway, Australia)

73. It was particularly troubling to note that little progress had been made in setting up field committees, as envisaged by resolution 47/199, to evaluate the programmes launched by such funding bodies as UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. The delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand intended to raise that question whenever country programme proposals were presented to their respective boards in 1994.

74. Programme assessment by field committees would not only yield more cogent results than did the current headquarters reviews, but would also benefit decentralization, decision-taking and accountability. The Secretariat should therefore, as quickly as possible, provide information on existing committees, their countries of operation, the date on which they were established and, in general terms, their programmes of work. The delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand would address a letter to that effect to the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

75. Australia, Canada and New Zealand noted with great interest the ideas on human sustainable development tendered by the UNDP Administrator, and hoped that those precepts would be incorporated into UNDP programmes. The priority-setting process under way at UNICEF and UNFPA, following the external evaluations recently conducted, should also be guided by the concept of human sustainable development.

76. The three delegations had actively participated in efforts to strengthen the internal evaluation activities of UNICEF and UNDP, and would monitor those bodies to ensure that they devoted the necessary resources to that process, in the interest of all member States. United Nations funds and programmes should also squarely address the question of accountability, and should be able to precisely define their specific responsibilities from policy, programme, administrative and financial vantages. That process would be helped along by the restructuring of United Nations activities in the social and economic sectors, which should rapidly be brought to a successful conclusion. Only then could the focus turn to the next essential task, the drafting of the agenda for development.

77. Mr. SIEBER (Swiss Observer) said that the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199 offered the United Nations system various possible means of improving operational capacities and impact in the field. He strongly supported current pragmatic efforts to test new approaches, such as the country strategy note, and the selection mechanisms for United Nations resident coordinators and field committees. Lessons must also be drawn from recent experiences with the use of national execution and with the programme approach.

78. With regard to activities undertaken thus far, early feedback from the workshop organized at Turin by the training centre of the International Labour Organization on the country strategy note were encouraging; fruitful exchanges had also taken place there among senior national representatives and United Nations teams, confirming the usefulness of that approach. The UNICEF evaluation should also be mentioned, another initiative the purpose of which was to enhance the efficiency of United Nations operational activities; the implementation of those recommendations should help to improve the delivery of services and the quality of capacity-building efforts throughout the system.

(Mr. Sieber, Observer, Switzerland)

79. With regard to the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, it was preferable to concentrate on the implementation modalities of manageable changes in the intergovernmental machinery. Those changes should be acceptable to all participating countries and could form building blocks in an evolutionary process.

80. The United Nations had an important role to play in multilateral development cooperation. He therefore hoped that an early agreement could be reached at the current session on what constituted a real step towards enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations development system.

81. Referring to the issue of United Nations interim offices, his delegation fully subscribed to a well-coordinated approach by the United Nations system, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 47/199, which reinforced the concept by requiring the system to increase the number of common premises and establishing field level committees. Even more importantly, that resolution reaffirmed that United Nations operational activities should be undertaken in accordance with the national strategies and priorities of the countries concerned. The host country clearly had a decisive role to play in determining the form of the United Nations presence. On the basis of an analysis of further experience, it was for the General Assembly, most appropriately in the context of the next comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities, to determine modalities concerning the future use of those offices.

82. Mr. Mongbe (Benin), Chairman, resumed the Chair.

83. Mr. HUSLID (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, welcomed the progress made on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which was a most useful instrument for improving the quality of United Nations development cooperation at the field level. All efforts must be geared to ensure the timely implementation of the resolution.

84. The different parts of the United Nations development system should develop more integrated approaches at the field level in the framework of the national development policies and strategies and under the leadership of the resident coordinators. Information must be shared throughout the system and common approaches developed. Furthermore, the work to harmonize the programming cycles of the various United Nations agencies, funds and programmes should be intensified.

85. The country strategy notes constituted a very interesting initiative. The resident coordinators and the recipient countries were thus equipped with a new instrument to coordinate various assistance programmes and thereby make development cooperation more effective. It was critically important to carry out that initiative since one could no longer afford a fragmented United Nations development system, where efforts overlapped. It was imperative that United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies at the field level fully complied with General Assembly resolution 47/199. Recipient countries should take full advantage of the country strategy notes in their efforts to integrate United Nations supported activities into their national programmes.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

86. Other measures should be taken in order to strengthen the role of the resident coordinator with a view to ensuring a more coordinated United Nations response to requests by developing countries. It was critical that specialized agencies, programmes and funds should participate fully at the field level in all aspects of the resident coordinator system, in accordance with national priorities. It was also necessary to improve coordination between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions.

87. Other key elements of General Assembly resolution 47/199 were the programme approach and national execution of operational activities. He welcomed the common interpretation of those approaches since that would increase the quality of development activities. The specialized agencies, funds and programmes should expedite the implementation of the programme approach and national execution on the basis of system-wide guidelines. In that regard, he underscored the need for country-specific application of the national execution modality in accordance with the recipient countries' capacities, needs and priorities. Emphasis must be put on building the necessary national capacity for making optimal use of national execution.

88. The Nordic countries were pleased that the need to strengthen United Nations support for human development was among the recommendations set forth in General Assembly resolution 47/199. The United Nations system, bilateral donors and recipient countries should all increase their efforts to set aside more of their development budgets for human development.

89. The speedy implementation of the recommendations set forth in resolution 47/199 was important to know in order to increase the impact of the system's development activities. The reform of the governance and funding system of United Nations operational activities were the other two requisites for building a stronger development system.

90. The Nordic countries fervently hoped that the momentum created at the World Summit for Children could be increased. They welcomed the establishment of national plans of action by a large number of countries and hoped that follow-up plans could be drawn up speedily. It was vitally important that plans for children should be integrated in national development strategies and reflected in budgetary processes. Within the Organization, there was a system-wide responsibility to follow up the implementation of the agenda laid down at the Summit. In that regard, he noted with satisfaction the work under way, particularly by UNDP and UNICEF, to coordinate and synthesize national plans of action for children and human development plans in cooperation with national governments.

91. Mr. RONNEBERG (Republic of the Marshall Islands) said that his country had benefited greatly from operational activities for development, particularly the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For more than 10 years, the Volunteers programme had been playing an expanding and increasingly effective role in the economic and social development of his country. United Nations Volunteers had made a valuable contribution to different types of government activities. Their number had increased from 1 in 1983 to 12 in 1993 and was expected to grow to about 15 in 1994. Mention could be made of the following jobs: a refrigeration mechanic, an accountant, an

(Mr. Ronnenberg, Republic of the Marshall Islands)

agronomist, a dentist, an agricultural-extension worker, a curriculum-development officer, an economist, a statistician, an industrial engineer, a specialist in nutrition education and experts in trades skills. A number of external funding agencies had financed the services of the Volunteers sent to his country: UNFPA, UNICEF and AsDB. ILO had collaborated in formulating the projects involved. That increase would not have been possible if the Volunteers programme had not redressed the monthly living allowance for Volunteers in the Marshall Islands. Other United Nations agencies, particularly UNDP, had made important contributions to the development of the Marshall Islands. Several projects were under way. The UNDP field office in Suva (Fiji) was facing logistical difficulties and in order to deal with them it would be desirable to increase the funds allocated to it.

92. Those examples were instances where United Nations activities had been beneficial in concrete terms while at the same time remaining cost-efficient. He was quite distressed to learn of the dire financial straits of the funding agencies and felt that there should be a stronger commitment to expand those programmes because of the positive influence that they would have on his country's development.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.